

We've Got Mail

■ LETTERS FROM THE FIELD

Gung-ho About Green Speed

I enjoyed reading your article in the January 2004 issue of *Golfdom* about green speeds ("Do Fast Greens Have You on the Run?").

I think the other reason superintendents have so much pressure put on them is because of professionals and their assistants. The pros go out and play with the members and make comments about how slow the greens are. Then those members talk to other members.

The one problem I see is some, if not most, professionals and assistants do not have enough knowledge of the agronomic aspects of maintaining golf courses and make these comments to impress the members. It is a double-edged sword. If the pros have any type of an agronomic understanding, then they think they know more than the superintendents. If they don't have the knowledge, then they say things that are either not true or misleading.

Gerry Tarsitano II
Certified Superintendent
Director of Golf Course
Maintenance and Grounds
The Hideaway
La Quinta, Calif.

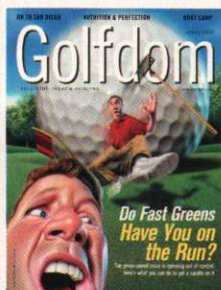
I would like to thank you for the timely article, "Do Fast Greens Have You on the Run?" in the January issue. I enjoyed reading the article because I can relate to it.

Jim Hippely
Superintendent
Salem (Ohio) Golf Club

I enjoyed your column and article on green-speed issues. To add to your library of inane comments about speed was one I got here a

couple of years ago. After playing in an event at a neighboring club, a member told me, "Our greens are like putting on mud."

I commended him on his understanding of the soil composition of our 95-year old push-up greens.
Jim Cross
Certified Superintendent
Rumson Country Club
Rumson, N.J.



Industry Should Focus on Support Positions, Too

As a sports-turf management professor, I would like to thank you for pointing out the facts that are facing our industry as they apply to education ("These Aren't the Good Old Days," Flagstick, February).

As I wrote a year ago when Joel Jackson published similar ideas, the problem is with the industry as a whole and not the educational institutions. There is and has always been a stigma with being anything less than being a superintendent.

Ask assistant superintendents, irrigation techs and spray techs around the country if they feel they are appreciated by their employers and are being adequately compensated for their positions. Better yet, ask them if they feel inferior to their bosses. Conditions are improving, but many of these jobs have a subservient feel to them due to the pay and the social culture at some courses.

We need to work as an industry to instill the idea that these support roles are great jobs and need to be compensated justly. I am of the opinion that if salaries of these support roles were closer in line with the superintendent

position, more responsibility could be given to these individuals. As a result, many of my superintendent friends would be able to sleep at night and maybe catch a day of relaxation during the summer months. This is a budgetary problem we have bred and need to correct.

Not only are there many applicants going after superintendent jobs, but many of these jobs are going to younger, less costly applicants in the name of savings to the golf course. Why wouldn't a young assistant jump at the chance to undercut an experienced (more expensive) superintendent if it meant a 100 percent pay raise for him. A comfortable living for the support staff could bring more of a balance to our industry.

As an instructor, I try and guide my students into work situations that they can enjoy for a long time to come, not into a climb-the-ladder-quick mentality. There are an abundance of these entry-level, degree-required positions. In the past three years I have 100 percent placement of my graduates. Now let's find a way to keep these individuals content in these positions.

Rusty Stachlewitz
Sports Turf Management Instructor
Kishwaukee College
Malta, Ill.

Thankful for Stability in an Uncertain Profession

You wrote a good editorial in February ("These Aren't the Good Old Days," Flagstick). You are right on the mark.

I have an awesome job, but it is not without its problems. But every time I get a little down I realize it could be a lot worse. The chance of being fired and having to deal with the issues

you mentioned is not something I look forward to.

I had the same conversation with a few folks at the show about how it seemed guys were staying longer at clubs. Last September marked my 11-year anniversary and although nobody brought me gifts, threw a party or even noticed it, it didn't matter. I know in this day and age I am fortunate to have a very good job, with a good employer and making a good wage.

Darren Davis
Director of Golf Course Operations
Olde Florida Golf Club
Naples, Fla.

Pros Pay Attention

First of all, thank you for putting out such an informative publication. As a PGA Member, I appreciate the insightful writing, and it helps me a good deal in understanding the agronomic issues that my superintendent and his staff face on a day-to-day basis. I took two introductory turf classes while I was an undergraduate at Penn State, but that is about where my knowledge stops. As a result, I pick our superintendent's brain on a regular basis.

Do you have many pros that ask you for information? I would hope that most of the PGA members around do try to keep up with what is happening.

Rick Williams
PGA Head Professional
Bucks County Country Club
Jamison, Pa.

We want to hear from you. You can e-mail your letters to Frank Andorka at fandorka@advanstar.com, fax to 440-891-2675 or send them via snail-mail to: 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130. Make sure to include your name and phone number for verification. Letters may be edited for length or relevance.